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Nameless

👁 129   ✔ 4   ⭐ 9

Chapter 1 by Alex Kearsley

The spires on the palace were black and curved up in a sharp sort of elegance. The whole thing sat on a floating island with a crumbling bridge being the only entrance. The mood was equally dark and a tad overcast for her liking.

She pulled her gloves up a little farther on her arms. It had been a long ride to get here and she was tired of her horse jousting between in her legs. It would rain soon and she really didn't want to enter the castle wet.

Her fingers gingerly felt the pouch tied to her waist. Her instructions had been clear. Take it in. Place it in the center of the great hall. Run like hell. She knew they didn't trust her to do it. Because she was a women. No one ever saw her as a paladin or like the great Valkyries of old. She was just… her.

With a sniff, she held her head high. No time for such thoughts. she had a job to do after all. and it was an important one. The shadows were growing even further across the plains and she knew it wouldn't be long until they encroached onto the golden realm.

The mare, a large golden bay, snorted and moved gingerly across the bridge. With each step, a few rocks tumbled into the darkness. She griped her reins a little tighter. The palace, all inky glass and sharp angles, soon loomed over her head. If there was a sun, it would have blocked it out completely.

As the mare clipped onto solid ground, it sighed with obvious relief and out it's head down, looking for a yummy treat. "Now, now," she whispered. "there's no time for that." She slid off the horse back and tied the reins to a dead tree. The first drops of rain fell.

"If I make it out of here," she mumbled. "You better not be soaking wet, ok?" Patting her horse, she silently prayed that she would live to see her again.

The front doors were huge, at least three times her own height. She gulped, and adjusted the straps to her breastplate. She went to push the doors open, but with a eerie whisper, they slid open, welcoming her to an utterly black hall. She hugged herself and took a step inside. Instantly, fires lit in the braziers lining the wall.

"He's… probably… not home right….? She took another step and felt a little of her courage return. With a swift motion, she pulled off her helmet and gently placed it on the ground. Her hair was a bright blonde, a trademark for descendants of the golden realm, cascaded over her shoulders. "Better."

She stepped lightly across the ground, making her way towards the heart of the castle. She had memorized the design before hand. The map was interesting, like a patchwork quilt. Many brave men had tried to do go before her. They had all flailed, and only a few had made it out with their lives. From those few, the map had been pieced together, drawn by many different knights.

She soon stepped into the grand hall. It was somehow lit like noonday, but there were no evident windows and she knew that, today, the sun was not shining. She sighed with uneasily relief. She had met no one on her way and she felt that this was a bad omen.

height and what might be considered armor, jutted from his body. She knew, from the classes she had taken, that his armor was, in fact, modified carbon that had grown from his own flesh.

Glancing down, she saw the pale grey skin shining from his abdomen. A long time ago, when his power had still been young, a knight had managed to tear a piece of his armor in a deadly fight. The knight had died soon after returning, but his sacrifice allowed us to study the material and determine the best way to combat it.

She reached into the her pouch as he spoke, fingering the small orb. "I, you might have guessed, knew you were coming as soon as you took that step from your land to mine." He smiled. Despite everything, his face was handsome, a sharp jaw that matched the nose and twinkling eyes the glinted malevolently. "Why do you think that you of all people could defeat me? where all others have failed? Even with that stupid little stone you have there, in your pouch? You must know that won't work." he laughed. "They have sent you to your death."

She struggled to speak. "I... I am more prepared than the others have been."

"You think so?" He said softly. "Do you really think so?"

"Yes!" She stood tall, the weird light glinting off her polished armor. "I am Gabrielle, daughter of the King of the Golden realm. and I can defeat you!" She took a step forwards, drawing the orb from its soft pouch.
The movement was too fast for her to see. Suddenly, he was looking over her, his hands grasping her face firmly, but gently. He smelt musty. The armor hurt as it dug into her cheek. She smiled down at her, cocking her head back so she was forced to look into his face.

"Now dear, do you really think you can defeat me?"

Chapter 2 by Athul Krishna A   ✏️

K'nath looked deep into Gabrielle's eyes. She was such a fragile thing, so delicate in his armoured hands. He could have broken her in two with just a snap of his fingers. Like he had

fear of pleasures lost. She was a princess, not a warrior.

Gabrielle had started pounding on K'nath with her bare fists, trying to free herself. He didn't even feel her blows beneath his carbon exoskeleton. K'nath smirked. So naive.

She almost reminded him of Helena.

Gabrielles fists had cut against his unforgiving armour and were bleeding. He could see the tears welling up in her eyes, both from the pain and helplessness. She kept punching his sides, streaking his black skin with the red of her blood.

"Stop dear", K'nath whispered to her, holding her face steady in his hands, "You are only hurting yourself."

"Let me go you vile monster" Gabrielle cried, tears streaming down her cheeks, "Please."

K'nath suddenly felt repulsed and angry. How dare the King insult him by sending him such a puny opponent! In a flash he caught Gabrielle by her flailing arms, lifted her off the floor and held her at eye level.

"Tell your King this is his last warning", he hissed, "K'nath won't be merciful a second time."

Gabrielle had dropped the orb and was now shaking with fear in his arms and sobbing. With another smirk, K'nath lifted his leg and brought it down on the orb, smashing the crystal into a thousand glittering pieces.

"Now, if the lady so pleases," he said softly to Gabrielle, "LEAVE!"

With a flick of his wrists, K'nath threw Gabrielle. She flew clear across the room, crashed against the wood of the giant door and crumpled to the ground.

K'nath turned his back on her in disgust. "Show yourself out Highborn. Your pony is waiting."

As he turned away to walk back into the shadows of his castle she dashed up and slashed at his armor only to shatter her sword and make him angry.

"I gave you a chance girl!" (she flinched at the word girl) "This is how you treat your saver!?"

He raised his hand and strike her cheek sending her flying back to where she was first thrown upon. He was coming closer to her getting ready to strike again. Leaping up, as every muscle in her body ached, she was willing to do whatever it was to make her father proud. She said to herself kicking K'nath upside the head and fracturing her ankle before landing on it funny, But still she stood tall and with pride.

"Young lady I will not tolerate this in my castle!"

She hated the word lady, girl, women, anything feminine she hated.

"CALL ME A YOUNG LADY AGAIN WHY DON'T YOU!?"

Reaching to her side and pulling out a dagger she turned around jabbing his side shattering her weapon. His amour is too strong for any metal she has.

K'nath grabbed her face and tossed her into a stone pillar across the room. If only she had her helmet she could will this battle, but she can't win.

K'nath walked over to Gabrielle as everything went dark in her eyes.

Chapter 4 by Insdantflarr   ✎

Gabrielle's eyes flickered open and she tried to look around, only to realise that she couldn't. Her head was looking forward and her arms and legs felt detached, as though they weren't hers. She could see a light. So inviting and so warm for her cold body. So irresistible.

She took a step forward, closer to the light. her breath caught as she felt empty like her insides were being hollowed out. Another step. And another. By then, Gabrielle felt fluffy on the inside and calm. Safe from the world. Safe from the dangers like the big - black - evil - thing - that - killed - her.

Killed?

Gabrielle thought back on what happened before she ended up in the room with the light. A hand. Black amour.

K'nath.

helpless and wanted to give in. It felt right to give in to the light but a piece of her mind screamed out no.

Her spark blew into a fire.

"NO!" she screamed, determination creeping into her voice, "I will not die today!"

Then she pushed through the feelings with all her might and woke up.

Gabrielle's hands groped around as she stirred from her experience. Her eyes were blurred but she could still see the dark person advancing upon her. She stumbled to her feet and reached into her secret pocket slowly unsheathing a black shard. K'nath gasped in shock as he realised that what she was holding was the missing part of his armour.

Gabrielle had stolen the piece of metal from the laboratory in the Golden realm when none of the scientists was looking. She had sneaked it across the border and hadn't told anyone. She knew this was her trump card and if she revealed it before she came to the castle, K'nath could have known and he could have made correct preparations.

K'nath's surprised expression turned back into a scowl and said in a low voice, "As if that will defeat me," he paused for a second and sneered, "young lady."

Gabrielle growled but kept her cool. She didn't want to do anything rash. K'nath disappeared in a blur but this time, she knew where to aim. She shoved the sharp shard behind herself and it clanged off another metal object. She spun around and K'nath was there, regaining his balance from the blow he just took.

"I will rip that pretty little head off your body," he said, composing himself. He moved again, dashing towards Gabrielle, his arm, held in front of him as a shield. She brought the piece of armour down, only for it to be deflected by K'nath's arm. This left her open and he punched her right in the stomach, sending her flying to the opposite side of the room.

Gabrielle groaned as she held her belly in pain. She was dizzy again as she looked up at the black wreathed figure, standing above her.

"Now this is what I do to guests who don't behave," K'nath grinned and slowly unsheathed a magnificent sword. It had a deep, purple colour like amethyst but it had a sinister feeling about it that made Gabrielle shudder. Black smoke rolled off the blade and a ray of light danced along the length of it.

"I believe in you," he said and collapsed onto the ground.

K'nath looked shocked as he saw the boy come into the room. 'No this wasn't meant to happen' he thought, worried.

Gabrielle recovered fast and grabbed the shard which was lying next to her and jumped up. She felt the adrenaline pump through her blood as she struck him on the head. K'nath stumbled and looked back at her.

"I'm going to kill you first," he roared and raised his sword high, swinging it down with his might.

Gabrielle stepped to the side and struck again. And again. She kept dodging K'naths swings and trying to stab but his armour was too strong. She needed to do something.

"Enough!" K'nath said, "Now I'll stop playing around."

K'nath disappeared in a blur and Gabrielle swung around, only to find hands around her neck.

"Gotcha," he whispered into her ear and squeezed.

"No!" Gabrielle choked out as K'nath enjoyed her slow death.

"I can't die now!"

She thought back to her father. To the boy who came into the room. To the people who all doubted that she could ever be strong. She felt...

DETERMINED

Gabrielle's vision turned red as she swung the black shard of amour into K'nath. Her hand glowed a fierce red as the edge of the piece tore through K'naths side. He gasped in shock and pain, slowly falling on his knees. He released Gabrielle and held his wound.

She panted in exhaustion and fell to her knees while K'nath lay on the ground, bleeding light.

"You-you-you," K'nath stuttered in surprise. Then his body became still.

Gabrielle took a few seconds to realise what she just did. She smiled and looked at the boy in the corner of the room. She had done it! She won! She-

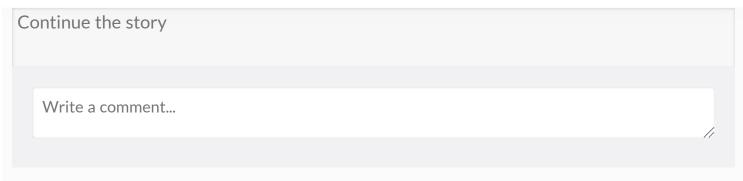Gabrielle's vision went black and she fell face-first onto the cold, marble floor.

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